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Lawyer TOOL

By NANCY LEWIS Constitution Washington Bure

his desire to interview the confessed attorney said Thursday he wants to talk with Alty. Gen. Griffin Bell about assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. WASHINGTON - James Earl Ray's

for James Earl Ray."

'It's got to be tied in some way to a trial

The attorney, James Lesar of Washington, made it clear in an interview that his own desire is to get a trial for Ray and that any interview will have to be linked with that.

"It's got to be tied in some way to a trial for James Earl Ray," Lesar said.
"Im convinced that Ray is in jail wrongfully. The only way I know to get him out of jail without an admission of guilt on his part is to have a trial."

Lesar, who said he has represented Ray without pay since 1970, said it would probably be "several weeks" before he could get all the informa-

tion together to present to Bell.

The attorney general told reporters at a breakfast meeting Thursday that he would like to personally interview Ray in an effort to resolve still unanswered questions in connection with

King's murder April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tenn.

"There's always been some desire on my part to interview Ray," Bell said. "I'd like to find out where he got his money and his travel documents. I, don't think we're going to find out except from Ray."

Asked if he might favor "legal consideration" for Ray in exchange for

Attorney James Lesar

information, Bell said he would "If I believed he was telling the truth."

To determine that, Bell said he would "want to meet with him myself" or send a top Justice Department official "in whom I have complete confidence and who knows how

to interrogate or negotiate."
Then, Bell said, he would decide about possible legal consideration for

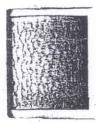
wanted to make a clean break." Ray "if I came to the conclusion he

conclusively rule out the possibility of indicated Ray acted alone, but didn' Justice Department review of the en-tire King murder investigation which week after his release of an extensive Bell's comments came less than a

a conspiracy.

The biggest question the seven-person task force wasn't able to answer son task force wasn't able to answer was where flay get his money between his escape from the Missourity ween his escape from the Missourity in April, 1967, and State Penitentiary in April, 1967, and his capture in London in June, 1988, 65 days after the killing. Ray, now serving a 99-year sen-

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a spokesman for the department. the Justice Department, according to tiary in Petros, Tenn., has never been interviewed extensively by the FBI or lence in the Brushy Mountain Peniten-

body I

When Ray was captured in London, his attorney said he didn't want to be interviewed and so there was no atspokesman said. tempt to talk with him there, the

The FBI was told that he might talk on the flight back to the United States talk then either. after his extradition, but he wouldn't Ray was turned over to Tennessee

ant attorney general in charge of civil rights instructed the FBI to attempt to interview Hay, the spokesman said. The FBI did meet with Ray on March 13 and March 14, 1995, according to FBI files, but he "provided no pertinent information." The spokesman said Ray simply would not talk with them about the case. Immediately after that, the assist-

> The task force which reviewed the case wrote Ray on Dec. 15, 1976 that they would like to interview him. Although he did not answer the task force directly, in a Dec. 20, 1976 let-ter to Lesar, Ray said, he agreed with your advice opposing the interview."
> "At the present I believe the only should testify before is a jury,

days later, Ray reportedly volun-toered to testify under oath to the In a letter to New York Times columnist Anthony Lewis revealed 10 House Select Committee on Assassina-Ray said.

views given a book on the King mur-der — George McMillan's "The Mak-ing of An Assassin"—and that the But Lesar said Thursday that was really a jab at the news media, not a logitimate offer to testily. Lesar said Ray was angered over favorable reoffer other reporters did. the committee after Lewis and some lenge, in essence that he would talk to was actually a sarcastic chal-

authorities upon his return and he was not interviewed then, either. On March 10, 1969. Ray agreed to plead

guilty in exchange for the 99-year sen-

"Quite obviously there would be no reason to call them." Lesar said. "It was a jab at the news media for carrying uncritical and glowing accounts of a childish book."

Ray several times since then and that Lesar said he has corresponded with

> he would divulge. Bay has made general comments about the offer to testify, but nothing

A spokesman for the House commit-tee said Thursday It has reached no agreements for Ray to testify. Bell said he will wait to see what the Ноцье tigation. launches a Justice Department invese will wait to see what the probe turns up before he

upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Ray has been seeking a trial in the King case since shortly after he con-fessed to the murder. His pleas have been turned down by the Tennessee courts and those decisions have been

Thursday would not rule out a trial for Ray if they could be convinced there is new evidence that would answer some of the lingering questions. That might be the type of "legal consideration" Bell could offer. Bell said sideration" Bell could offer. he will coordinate any efforts with ennessee authorities. But Justice Department sources

Lesar contends that "Ray was set up by the persons who conspired to shoot Dr. King, to take the rap for a crime he did not commit."

The attorney said Ray "did not willingly participate in the conspiracy and that he did not shoot Dr. King."

